

**TOWN COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING
AUGUST 12, 1998**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were Mayor Venis, Vice-Mayor Cox, Councilmembers Bush, Paul, and Weiner. Also present were Interim Town Administrator Robert Rawls, Assistant Town Attorney Jon Hinden and Town Clerk Gail Reinfeld recording the meeting.

Director of Community Services Sharon Pierce-Kent stated that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board had met on several occasions to review all the proposed park projects. She indicated that there were very few differences and a lot of similarities with the projects themselves and costs were reviewed.

Mr. Rawls stated that staff had worked through a number of community workshops and the Board had also held workshops. A recommended program was developed and he stated that the program would be supported by a \$10 million bond initiative. Mr. Rawls advised that staff, with the Board, had a task ahead of them to market that the bond the community and show that it was a worthwhile project. He felt the best thing to do would be to review each project and the Board would give their preferences to Council and then Council could give its direction. He felt that it was necessary for Council to make its final decision on the dollar amount of the bond initiative and the decision to place that initiative on the ballot in order to make the November referendum. Mr. Rawls indicated that a decision was needed by the August 19th Council meeting.

Bergeron Arena

Mayor Venis stated that staff had recommended \$11,500 and the Board recommended that no amount be funded. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that staff had reviewed the needs of the arena and upgraded bleacher seating with the bleacher risers was needed.

Board member Joyce Stewart stated that the Board was trying to narrow things down that would apply to the least amount of people. She indicated that the Board felt that as the arena was a specialized area, the Board could begin by eliminating some things in this area.

Mayor Venis asked for the Council's comments. Councilmember Paul stated that the arena should be considered as a park and treated as such and upgraded. She felt that staff had done an excellent job and the arena was being utilized almost every weekend. Councilmember Paul added that the arena was used for more events than rodeos and she felt it was important that it be maintained. She also stated that the arena was a centerpiece for the Town and she felt it was important to maintain it as a park and include, at least, the upgraded bleachers.

Ms. Pierce-Kent indicated that the upgrade was for foot risers so young children would not slip through the bleacher openings and added that this was more of a safety issue. She went on to state that the Town needed to get the support of the individuals who used the arena. Ms. Pierce-Kent felt that the arena would generate enough income that somewhere along the line the roof could be repaired and do whatever else needed to be done.

Mayor Venis asked if there were future plans to redo the arena bleachers and have them configured differently as there had been previous talk regarding this issue. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that there were no present plans regarding this item.

Joyce Stewart asked if she could go back to the rodeo arena for a moment. She stated that there had been quite a bit of lengthy discussion in their meeting about the possibility of some of the rent coming in from the groups using the facility that are not scheduled activities for the Town, and using part of the money budgeted for a maintenance fund instead of being taken from the parks fund. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that a separate account was maintained from the rental and she felt a lot of it covered the costs of the lights. Ms. Stewart felt that the lights, clean-up, etc. were part of the regular maintenance. She felt they were now speaking about repair work or improvements. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that most of the money charged for the rental of the arena basically covered the clean-up and did not cover any additional maintenance and that was why it was in such need at the present time. Ms. Stewart suggested that some extra money should be built in the rental fee.

Mayor Venis stated that he felt it would be important for Budget and Finance Director Christopher Wallace to provide a profit and loss statement on the arena. Mayor Venis stated that there was now one full year of operations with enhanced rentals each weekend and the frequency of rentals had increased dramatically. He suggested that

Mr. Wallace present a report on this fiscal year's arena performance when the budget was discussed in September and a further evaluation could then be made. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated in order to encourage the use of the arena, the fees were made very reasonable to make it available to all types of groups with all types of activities.

Mr. Rawls stated that one of the questions that had come up in the review of this matter was that the money received for the arena was placed in the general fund. Board member Corey Johnson stated that part of the fee went into a maintenance, upkeep and repair program where it accumulated over several years.

Mr. Johnson stated that it was his understanding that this was the first bond and referendum workshop. He clarified that the bond was for the improvements to the parks and recreation program and possible construction of new facilities. Mr. Johnson stated that the bond was not to be used towards the maintenance facilities which was a budgeted item which would also include personnel. Mr. Hinden stated that from a legal perspective, Mr. Johnson was correct and it had to be made clear what the money was going to be used for in.

Mr. Wallace stated that in reviewing the project request with Ms. Pierce-Kent, there were items in the request that he felt could not be used in a bond issue because the use for life was too short. He felt they were maintenance items and not capital improvements. Ms. Pierce-Kent advised that this issues had been removed from the requests. Mr. Wallace explained stated that bonds could not be issued that would exceed the useful life of the asset.

Bergeron Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent was asked if the fence to the entrance area went along 100th Avenue. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that there were currently gates which staff wanted to extend along with some fencing and hedges to keep the cars out.

Mayor Venis stated that in several of the proposals replacing playground equipment, the equipment to be acquired would be the most modern and rust resistant and questioned if would it be the plastic type. Ms. Pierce-Kent replied in the affirmative but indicated that a lot of the structural support beams were still metal. She stated that the new equipment would meet the industry standards that were regulated at this point in time.

Mr. Johnson stated that the bond issue parameters originally discussed by the Board amounted to \$16 million. He stated that after this meeting, the Board was informed that the bond issue was for only \$10 million before the completion of the survey had been conducted. Mr. Johnson stated that there was concern on the Board's part that it were not in agreement with all the issues in sense of the numbers because they had estimated and identified more items. He added that the only reason Council got the comment back that the Board was in agreement was because of the limits that the Board was given in which to operate. Mr. Johnson stated that the Board's concern was that the Town was only building something to maintain and to provide what they presently had. They felt the numbers they were limited to boxed them in for the numbers projected for the future.

Mayor Venis stated that he would like to see a \$16 million bond issue on the ballot, however, the poll results indicated that a \$10 million bond may barely pass. He felt that Mr. Johnson was correct that if the \$10 million passed now and they projected what they needed two to three years, they could go for a supplement. Mayor Venis stated that he would rather have voter approval for \$10 million rather than the voters denying the bond because of a larger amount.

Mr. Rawls stated he did not believe that everyone agreed with a \$16 million bond. He stated that landscaping and general maintenance should be handled by another segment, but he felt a \$13 million bond could be reached. Mr. Rawls suggested that the Board revisit some of the park issues and identify the issues that it thought were most important. He felt that a \$10 million bond was limiting.

Ms. Stewart stated that the Board had narrowed it to one "great central park." She indicated that the Town could not do things in all the little parks and Pine Island Community Center. Ms. Stewart indicated that the Board felt if it could not do everything on the list or the majority of things, then the list needed to be narrowed to one big park with all the amenities.

Board member Gayle Ling stated that it was her idea that a larger bond issue could include the arena improvements, larger sites, and other recommendations. She felt the difference between \$78 or \$120 a year in taxes would not be that much to homeowners since they could actually see things being accomplished.

Councilmember Weiner commented that he thought the issue would be supported but the Town needed to provide areas for the senior citizens. He stated that in looking at the survey results, approximately one-third of the people surveyed were 55 and older and the Town needed to look to provide those people with services they needed. Councilmember Weiner indicated that senior citizens typically voted and if they were educated on the issues, the bond issue could possibly pass. Vice-Mayor Cox agreed with educating the voters.

Berman Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent was stated that Berman Park was one of the oldest parks in the Town. The land had been donated and the 20+ year old equipment needed to be removed. At one of the neighborhood park meetings, the community requested that the racquetball court be demolished as it was an eye sore and a big playground added.

Mayor Venis asked if the same equipment would be provided to each of the parks. Ms. Pierce-Kent replied affirmatively, however, the prices vary as some of the parks had existing equipment and would only need replacement items.

Gessner Sports Complex

Ms. Pierce-Kent advised that the girls softball program utilized this complex. She stated that the equipment was very old, the dugouts needed repairing, and the lighting for the t-ball field needed repairing. Discussion followed on scoreboards.

Councilmember Weiner asked Ms. Pierce-Kent if the recommendation for the Complex included the clay. She replied negatively, as the clay would only last one season. She stated that the clay would be included in the upcoming budget.

Driftwood Estates

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that the Town signed a contract with Department of Environmental Protection for a \$200,000 grant for improvements and indicated that a Community Development Block Grant had been allocated for the following year for lighting the fields. She indicated that there were additional improvements that did not fit into the two grants.

Ivanhoe Community Room

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that the community room was actively used every night by homeowners association groups and recreational classes. Additional landscaping and drainage improvements, was being requested.

Ivanhoe Lane Acquisition

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that the Board recommended the purchase of a 3.8 acre park adjacent to the existing fire station/community center.

Mr. Rawls stated that the issue for Council to evaluate in the bond initiative was the concept of securing lands for future park development. A number of the comments received from the survey was that people were looking for immediate improvement, enhancement of programs, and extensions of programs.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Board was in agreement to purchase the 3.8 acres, but there should be no dollar figure because the property owner may not lower the price. Mr. Rawls stated that staff was trying to represent the current market price of the property

Board member Joette Alongi stated that the younger kids would utilize the community center in the morning, senior citizens mid-day, and the older kids later in the day. She suggested that the community center be enlarged and at a later date, a pool could be added. Ms. Alongi added that there had been discussion about a satellite office for a police substation instead of the office located at the Shell gas station.

Board member Debbie Apolinario stated that the people should not be promised that this property would be bought as part of the bond and indicated that the purchase price \$670,000 was too much for that property. Councilmember Weiner stated that he would like to see money allocated towards land acquisition in the western areas without identifying any particular piece of property. Councilmember Bush asked if there was any consideration of banking land on the east side as new parks were needed in this area. Mr. Rawls advised that the Town was looking at a major expansion for Gessner Sports Complex and to use Nova High School's facilities as an alternative to the Town securing ownership of a site.

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that staff was still researching the matter of parks in the eastern areas. Councilmember Weiner stated that if the Town was committed to buying land in the future, it should be sure that there would be funding rather than waiting five to seven years for future building.

Lang Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that this was another eastside older, passive, neighborhood park. which needed new playground equipment. She indicated that Council had adopted a resolution for a forestry grant and staff was looking at landscaping improvements at the park.

Linear Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent advised that the Town was working on a management plan with the State of Florida for this park. Discussion followed on available grants with it being that the Town had been very successful in receiving grants.

Nova Middle and High Schools

Ms. Pierce-Kent explained the lease agreements between the Town and the Broward County School Board with the typical lease being for 40 years in length at \$1 per year rental. She advised that the only differences between the Board's recommendations and the staff's recommendations was that staff was recommending that the lighting of the baseball and softball fields should be included as it would offer additional opportunities. The Board felt that these items could be cut as Pine Island Community Center could be used for softball and baseball games.

Oak Hill Equestrian Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that improvements would include replacing playground equipment, providing a new entrance sign, and a wash rack.

Orange Park Community Center

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that it was being requested to renovate the building to provide central air conditioning, install large canopy trees in the front and security lighting on the building.

Orange Park Community Playground

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that it was being recommended to provide playground equipment on a vacant lot in the Orange Park area. She indicated that hedges may be needed.

Pine Island Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that it was being recommended that the Park be made into multi-purpose facility that would accommodate children, adults, and senior citizens. She indicated that a recommendation was also being made to not install a shower facility as they generally were not used.

Mayor Venis confirmed with Ms. Pierce-Kent that the Board and staff were in agreement with the exception of the shelters which provided a difference of \$375,000. Mr. Rawls felt there was a different perception between the Board and staff in connection with overhead costs associated with construction elements in the project.

Mayor Venis asked what was the square footage of the facility being considered. Athletic Supervisor Mark Dornacker advised that the center would be a 25,000 square foot facility.

Councilmember Paul questioned the items that had been cut from the original list. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that expectations for the playground were lowered and indicated that costs for spray playgrounds were \$20,000 to \$100,000.

Ms. Pierce-Kent indicated that the request for concession stands decreased from six to four and basketball courts decreased from eight to four. She indicated that more facilities would have been added if more money were available. Councilmember Paul commented that volleyball courts had been mentioned in some of the original discussions with Ms. Pierce-Kent advising that the courts were removed as this was going to be a future Eagle Scout project.

Mayor Venis suggested that the amount for playgrounds could be increased to \$75,000 and still be within the threshold of the \$10 million.

Potter Park

Police Chief Jack Mackie stated that there was still a tremendous need for basketball court equipment so tournament plays could be held and the playground equipment needed to be updated. He indicated the need for shade trees and a basketball court for younger children; however, two new courts were needed for the older children. Chief Mackie indicated that the softball field needed some improvements and the concession stands needed renovating. He advised that the community wanted increased street lighting and the ballfield for lit basketball courts would be a welcomed addition.

Reflections Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that staff wanted to provide drainage, refurbish the playground equipment, add concrete curbs to keep the sand in on the playground area and grass out, and provide additional landscaping. She added that staff also wanted to begin a tree legacy program including larger trees and to provide a shelter. Mayor Venis questioned Ms. Pierce-Kent on refurbishing the playground equipment. Ms. Pierce-Kent advised that the older equipment would be replaced and the equipment that could be fixed would be refurbished.

Shenandoah Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that the only request was for the construction of a shelter type building. Mayor Venis asked the size of the building. It was estimated to be approximately 2,000 square feet.

Discussion followed on a facility for senior citizens with Ms. Pierce-Kent indicating that the Town was trying to only use Robbins Lodge for rental events. It was indicated that a survey had shown that 60% of the Town's seniors resided between University Drive and Flamingo Road; therefore, Pine Island Community Center was a good central location for senior citizens. Vice-Mayor Cox stated that she was looking for a dedicated senior wing. Ms. Apolinario indicated that she wanted to make sure the seniors would be given their own area.

Waverly Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that the Park had lights for the racquetball court and it was recommended that a court be provided with additional trees, benches and shelter. She indicated that playground curbing was also needed.

Veterans Park

Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that this was a small neighborhood park and one recent project of the boy scouts and girl scout was the volleyball courts. She indicated that the Town had installed play equipment and the residents felt the park was pretty complete. Ms. Pierce-Kent indicated that additional shade trees were needed.

Waterford Park

Mayor Venis asked if the playground equipment had been replaced. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that one structure was replaced and other structures needed replacing.

Mayor Venis asked about committing \$40,000 for the courts and wondered if that was a real priority for spending such money. Ms. Pierce-Kent stated that it was a convenience but not a priority. She indicated that she thought the parking lot was a priority as people were currently parking on the streets. The neighbors originally wanted a very small parking lot because they felt people would walk to the park.

Western High School

Ms. Pierce-Kent advised that the Town had a lease with the School as the School lit the tennis facilities which were available to the residents in the evenings. She indicated that the School's vice-principal would be providing a list of games when the field would be needed, but had promised to accommodate the Town throughout the majority of the year. Vice-Mayor Cox felt that the Town needed a percentage commitment for a certain block of time with Mr. Rawls indicating that a more firm confirmation would be obtained from the School before the bond decision was concluded. The Board had not recommended improvements as it was afraid that the Town would not be able to use the fields because of School activities. Vice-Chair Cox felt that before the Town proceeded with any improvements, it needed to look at the amount of time the Town would be able to utilize the fields.

Councilmember Weiner clarified his previous comments regarding courts at Waverly Park, if the Town was looking at a certain number and "there was a trade off between that and increasing the parks" at Pine Island Park,

he would rather spend some of the money towards increasing the parks then trying to renovate the two courts. A woman requested that the Town visit the area as the courts were heavily used.

Discussion followed on increasing the amount of the bond to provide for land acquisition, construction and contingencies.

Councilmember Bush stated that the east side needed money set aside for acquisition. He indicated that there were 20 acres east of "58th" which may be donated to the Town and the State owned Crystal Lake which could possibly be leased for \$1 per year. Mr. Rawls advised that the State had decided that some of the surplus lands had a residual value and an appraiser had thought that a housing development could be built on a 24 foot strip of land. He added that the State was currently in a marketing mode, however, staff could request that this decision be rethought.

Councilmember Weiner stated his thoughts of \$1 million being set aside without indicating what area this money would be designated for.

Budget and Finance Director Christopher Wallace advised that a \$10 million bond would cost a property owner approximately \$22 per year assuming there was no devaluation of property.

Town Clerk Reinfeld advised that the bond resolution had been advertised for a public hearing on August 19th. She indicated that if the bond amount was to be changed, the resolution may need to be readvertised and a special meeting may need to be held; however, she would need to research the advertising requirements.

Ms. Pierce-Kent questioned what the bond amount should be. Mayor Venis responded that \$12 million would provide additional monies for the east side.

There being no objections or further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

